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Dark-Side Personality Trait Interactions: Amplifying Negative Predictions of Leadership Performance

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Abstract

Drawing on trait interaction theory and personality disorder subtypes, we examined narcissism-by-trait interactions (e.g., narcissism × antisocial tendencies) for predicting leadership performance in four independent archival samples ($Ns = 285, 120, 106, 559$). This study extends research on multiplicative effects of normative leader characteristics to consider how narcissism becomes particularly disruptive when combined with other extreme interpersonal tendencies. Moderated multiple regression results show interactions involving selected trait pairs varied across samples. Pooled analyses showed (a) differential generalizability across trait pairings and (b) that lower tiered managerial roles and weaker industrial contexts may release such effects. Inconsistencies suggest the need to consider sample-specific trait demands in future trait interaction research, normal, or maladaptive. All told, findings suggest that subclinical personality interactions might accelerate leader derailment, offer unique insights into leader competence, and extend trait interaction research to aberrant tendencies.

Keywords

dark side, leadership, Millon variants, narcissism, antisocial, trait interactions, trait configurations, hierarchical level

Dysfunctional leadership has far-reaching effects on the viability of an organization. Surveys routinely suggest 65% to 75% of employees rate their supervisor as the most detestable part of their working life (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005), while empirical research shows supervisory behavior to be a major determinant of employees' overall satisfaction (Ironson, Smith, Brannick, Gibson, & Paul, 1989). More recent meta-analyses corroborate this finding by showing that a variety of leadership behaviors have strong effects on follower satisfaction (DeRue, Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011), mental health (Montano, Reeske, Franke, & Hüffmeier, 2016), and well-being (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). Published estimates of the base rate of supervisor failure average around 50%, leading Hogan, Hogan, and Kaiser (2011) to conclude that “two-thirds of existing managers are insufferable and at least half will eventually be fired” (p. 556). Based on expert judgments and utility calculations, the cost of one derailed leader ranges from \$500,000 to \$3 million (Lombardo, Ruderman, & McCauley, 1988; Russell, 2001), suggesting bad leadership is common and costly.

Early longitudinal studies (Bentz, 1967), qualitative investigations (McCall & Lombardo, 1983), and extended empirical research (Lombardo et al., 1988) all report that dysfunctional leaders have unique attributes. Researchers have

used these results to support popular texts (Scott, 2005), historical typologies (Kellerman, 2004), and taxonomies of negative characteristics (Dotlich & Cairo, 2003). An especially influential perspective, drawn from the personality disorder literature, emphasizes narcissistic, antisocial, and histrionic tendencies (Harms, Spain, & Hannah, 2011; Hogan et al., 2011). Most of this research treats derailment traits, singly or in combination, in terms of additive and possibly incremental main effects. A relatively unexplored question is whether prediction of leader performance can be improved by looking beyond main effects.

An alternative is considering trait interactions, which specify multiplicative models where prediction depends on individuals' joint standing on two or more traits. For example, the degree to which narcissism undermines leadership could depend on a leader's antisocial tendencies, such that the negative impact of narcissism is magnified in those with antisocial

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leanings. Researchers have shown that interactions among normal-range “bright-side” traits (e.g., conscientiousness, agreeableness) predict managerial performance (e.g., Witt, Burke, Barrick, & Mount, 2002); but, to date, none have examined interactions among dysfunctional traits. Guided by propositions discussed by Millon (1995, 2011), we sought to fill this gap by assessing interactions among targeted dysfunctional characteristics for predicting leader performance in four independent organization samples.

The Dark Side of Leadership Personality

Historically, leadership has been studied almost exclusively in positive terms (Bono & Judge, 2004; Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007), encompassing romanticized and idealized components (Bligh, Kohles, Pearce, Justin, & Stovall, 2007) such as heroism and charisma. However, increasing evidence of corruption (Padilla et al., 2007), failed visionaries (Conger, 1990), and petty tyranny (Ashforth, 1994) has drawn attention to the darker sides of leadership, with ties to a number of organizationally undesirable outcomes, including lowered contextual and task performance (Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006; Moscoso & Salgado, 2004), diminished use of contingent reward (Resick, Whitman, Weingarden, & Hiller, 2009), and elevated follower stress (Skogstad, Einarsen, Torsheim, Aasland, & Hetland, 2007).

Since the early 1980s, research on leadership derailment has emphasized that effective leadership requires both the presence of positive traits and the absence of negative traits. Lombardo et al. (1988) recognized that highly skilled leaders fail if they possess personality defects entailing angry outbursts, moodiness, and/or inconsistency. Similarly, Bass (1985) suggested that “Despite their self-confidence, self-determination, and freedom from inner conflicts, some charismatics will fail . . . as a consequence of particular deficiencies or exaggerated tendencies” (pp. 50-51). Hogan et al. (2011), in their review of the leadership derailment literature, conclude that reasons for leadership failure include lack of self-control, inability to adapt, and poor interpersonal skills. They surmise that

Every study of managerial failure reviewed [here] points to “overriding personality defects” as a key issue. The reason these defects matter lies in the definition of leadership—which is the ability to build, maintain, and guide a team that can outperform competition. The defects disrupt the interpersonal relationships needed to build a team and corrupt the judgment needed to guide its performance. (p. 13)

This growing recognition of poor leadership behaviors has broadened leadership literature to focus on “dark-side” traits and behaviors (Conger, 1990; Hogan et al., 2011).

Leadership, Personality, and Cross-Trait Interactions

On a broader scale, the leadership field has experienced a resurgence of interest in personality (Penney, David, & Witt, 2011). Contributing factors include emergence of the five factor model (FFM) as an organizing framework for personality characteristics (Digman, 1990), meta-analytic results showing relationships between personality and leadership criteria (Judge, Bono, Illies, & Gerhardt, 2002), and both methodological and theoretical advances in the field of personality (Hogan & Holland, 2003; Tett & Burnett, 2003). For instance, Judge et al.’s (2002) meta-analysis revealed corrected mean correlations between leadership ratings and Extraversion ($\rho = .31$), Conscientiousness ($\rho = .28$), Neuroticism ($\rho = -.24$), and Openness to Experience ($\rho = -.24$), in support of a dispositional basis for leadership.

Of growing interest to leadership researchers is the degree to which personality traits combine interactively in their effects on valued outcomes (Penney et al., 2011). Trait interactions specify that the predictive value of a given trait varies by the level of one or more other traits. Research supports cross-trait interactions on both theoretical and empirical grounds. Pioneering personality theorists, such as Allport (1961), Lewin (1935), and Murray (1938), emphasized understanding the “total personality” by attending to the organization of traits within the individual as opposed to viewing “personality as a sum-total of traits” (Winter & Barenbaum, 1999, p. 10). An early proponent of the holistic approach, Meehl (1959), studied the predictive merit of MMPI configurations to diagnose psychopathology. Since then, many applied areas of psychology, including executive coaching and educational psychology, have adopted a configural approach to understanding people as integrated organisms (Highhouse, 2002).

Several studies also offer empirical support for trait interactions (Burke & Witt, 2004; Foti & Hauenstein, 2007; Jensen & Patel, 2011; Judge & Erez, 2007; King, George, & Hebl, 2005; Witt et al., 2002). Witt and colleagues have been especially active on this front. Conscientiousness-by-Agreeableness interactions, for example, were replicated in jobs requiring social cooperation, such that high Conscientiousness and low Agreeableness combine to form a complainer/ micromanager configuration (Witt et al., 2002). Judge and Erez (2007) reported comparable findings involving high standing on both Emotional Stability and Extraversion, that is, a “happy” personality, in predicting job performance. Penney et al. (2011) offer rationales for exploring other plausible Big Five trait interactions, such as Conscientiousness-by-Emotional Stability, Conscientiousness-by-Extraversion, and Agreeableness-by-Emotional Stability. In all cases, the impact of one trait is moderated by a second trait, enhancing the potential

utility of personality assessment in organizations beyond that of simple trait main effects.

Cross-trait interactions may be particularly germane to leadership, given the variety of traits that have been linked to performance in this domain (Judge et al., 2002) and the complexity of situational demands most leaders routinely face (Zaccaro, 2007). Trait configurations offer suitably rich and complex descriptions of leadership extending beyond the individual variables alone. For instance, the supposed “Dexter effect”—an emotionless, deviant leader still considered dependable and responsible—may occur in leaders high on antisocial tendencies but low or neutral on manipulateness and/or egotism (O’Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2012). Thus, antisocial personality may be more likely to play out negatively when combined with narcissism. Using an interactive, trait pattern approach, Foti and Hauenstein (2007) found that military cadets high on intelligence, dominance, self-efficacy, and self-monitoring were more likely to emerge and be effective as leaders. Such findings support Yukl’s (2006) suggestion that “A more holistic approach is needed to examine patterns of leader traits in relation to leader effectiveness” (p. 207).

Cross-trait interaction research offers promise for improving prediction of valued work behavior, but most such research has relied on the FFM “bright-side” personality dimensions. The current study sought to extend this line of research to consideration of interactions among dark-side traits in predicting and understanding leadership in multiple samples. The main question here is whether the effects of one’s standing on a given dysfunctional trait are amplified or diminished by one’s standing on a second dysfunctional trait. More specifically, do dark-side trait interactions contribute incrementally to predicting leadership performance beyond corresponding main effects? Conceptual foundations for exploring dark-side trait interactions with narcissism are considered next.

Narcissism. Narcissistic leaders have been frequent targets of study (Grijalva & Harms, 2014; Resick et al., 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Many world leaders, ranging from tyrants and cult leaders to politicians and business icons, display narcissistic tendencies (Resick et al., 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). The American Psychiatric Association (*DSM-IV-TR*, 2000) identifies narcissistic personality disorder as a “pervasive pattern of grandiosity” in fantasy or behavior, combined with a “need for admiration and lack of empathy” (p. 717). Hogan and Hogan (2001) label leaders with attributes such as “bold.” Specifically, “bold” leaders are arrogant, resistant to feedback, insensitive to peers, and tend to overevaluate their own personal capabilities. Serving such tendencies is a shallow self-concept, which motivates narcissists to continuously seek external admiration while disregarding and exploiting others along the way (Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009). Studies show

narcissism to be negatively related to interpersonal performance and integrity, and positively linked to self-serving behaviors and self-inflated ratings of leadership capabilities (Blair, Hoffman, & Helland, 2008; Judge et al., 2006; Van Dijk & De Cremer, 2006).

Despite its generally negative connotation, narcissism also has a good side (Judge et al., 2009; Paunonen, Lönnqvist, Verkasalo, Leikas, & Nissinen, 2006; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). In particular, narcissists tend to be charismatic, courageous, and productive (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006), can attract followers and rise quickly (Hogan & Hogan, 2001), and take drastic actions when needed to accomplish larger goals (Judge et al., 2009; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). In two studies of military cadets, narcissism was found to be valuable both for leadership development (Harms et al., 2011) and leadership emergence (Paunonen et al., 2006). In a similar vein, historiometric findings suggest that presidential narcissism is a double-edged sword, correlating with ratings of not only ethical misconduct but also greatness (Watts et al., 2013).

That narcissism can contribute to or undermine performance calls for consideration of moderators. For instance, narcissists may be effective in crisis situations demanding grand vision and innovative problem solving, but counterproductive when allowed to hold power for extended periods of time (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Others suggest a too-much-of-a-good-thing hypothesis, such that followers find narcissistic leaders appealing in modest amounts during initial interactions but this influence wanes over time, especially for highly narcissistic leaders (Grijalva, Harms, Newman, Gaddis, & Fraley, 2015). Moderators might also include other traits. Narcissists high on socialized power motives (i.e., group-focused) may empower whereas those high on personalized power motives (i.e., self-focused) may abuse (House & Howell, 1992). Paunonen et al. (2006) found narcissists emerged as leaders when also low on Machiavellianism. The highest cadet ratings on leadership were associated with the unique combination of a strong ego and low levels of manipulation and impression management. In a similar vein, Owens, Wallace, and Waldman (2015) found leader narcissism had a positive effect on followers’ subjective and objective performance but only when coupled with high humility.

The possibility that dark-side traits might interact with each other in their effects on judged leader performance is the primary focus of the current study. Narcissism (i.e., “bold” in Hogan and Hogan’s terms) is a key target of interest due to its prominence in the leadership literature. We draw primarily on Millon’s (1995, 2011) narcissism subtypes for testing specific interactions which, historically, has served as a foundation for the *DSM-IV* personality disorder schema on which models of dysfunctional traits are based (Hogan & Hogan, 2001; Moscoso & Salgado, 2004). Millon proposed most dysfunctional individuals exhibit a

subtype characterized by the blending of a primary personality disorder with features of one or more subsidiary types. This sentiment is echoed by other derailment researchers emphasizing the importance of looking beyond isolated character flaws to more complex trait combinations (Furnham, 2010). As noted by Kets de Vries (2006), "Anyone trying to analyze their own or a leader's style, then, should remember that 'pure' prototypes are fairly rare. Because of the blending of styles, diagnoses are very difficult to make" (p. 131). Although largely untested (Levy, Chauhan, Clarkin, Wasserman, & Reynoso, 2009), Millon's scheme of prototypical variants combining two or more disorders has inspired a multitude of practitioner-oriented works (Davis & Patterson, 2005; Petrocelli, Brian, Glaser, Calhoun, & Campbell, 2001).

Targeted Millon Narcissism Subtypes

Narcissistic × Antisocial: The Unprincipled Subtype. Narcissistic and antisocial individuals share a number of socially malevolent tendencies, such as devaluing others, exploitation, and callousness (Gustafson & Ritzer, 1995; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Despite overlap, the two traits are distinct (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Hogan and Hogan (2009) suggest antisocial leaders lack the ambition of narcissists and labeled such tendencies as "mischievous," identified by risk taking, recklessness, and limit-testing. Separating the two traits yields two types of narcissists, as discussed by Glad (2002):

The reparative type . . . is apt to frame his missions in ways that accord with the needs and fantasies of his followers and thus tie him to them in some meaningful way. The malignant narcissism, by way of contrast, manifests not only the self-inflation of all narcissistic types, but also greater aggression and deficiency in his superego development. His antisocial behavior is manifest in aggression or sadism directed against others or against himself through suicidal and self-destructive behaviors. (pp. 20-21)

Narcissistic antisocials have been characterized as both extremely grandiose and lacking conscience and behavioral regulation (Pollock, 1978), or as narcissists without morality (Kernberg, 1970). Millon (1995, 2011) coined this subtype the *unprincipled narcissist*: individuals possessing an unbridled sense of self-worth and a complete indifference toward others. The lack of remorse combined with a need for admiration may lead to ruthless, cruel, and erratic behaviors in the pursuit and preservation of control; such leaders manifest hyperaggressive, tyrant-like tendencies (Glad, 2002). Reviewing the distinction, Furnham, Richards, and Paulhus (2013) find narcissists are more likely to self-enhance whereas psychopaths are more likely to harm others. Interactively, this suggests a demand-punish dynamic in which the leader's narcissistic sense of self-importance

increases opportunities for confrontations, triggering psychopathic tendencies to inflict harm:

Hypothesis 1: The relationship between narcissism (bold) and performance is moderated by antisocial (mischievous) tendencies, such that the negative relationship is stronger for leaders who are high on antisocial tendencies.

Narcissism × Histrionic: The Vivacious Subtype. The *DSM-IV* (APA, 2000) defines histrionic personality disorder as a pattern of excessive emotionality and attention seeking, including an exaggerated need for attention and inappropriate seductiveness. Hogan and Hogan (2001) label individual differences in histrionic tendencies as being "colorful." High scorers tend to be expressive, animated, and dramatic, often seeking to be the center of attention. One study found colorful to be a positive predictor of self-rated transformational leadership (Khoo & Burch, 2008). Gardner and Avolio (1998) noted that, "charismatic leaders are exceptionally expressive persons, who employ rhetoric to persuade, influence, and mobilize others. These leaders are the epitome of drama" (p. 33). While such individuals may initially project a strong, engaging persona, their chronic need for attention can result in overcommitment (Hogan & Hogan, 2001), showmanship (Dotlich & Cairo, 2003), and theatrics to make themselves, rather than the business, the key focus of attention (Furnham, 2010).

Adding the chronic need for attention to the narcissist's superficial self-aggrandizement, Millon identified the *vivacious* subtype: an ebullient, energetic, and animated persona with highly charged, but short-lived, cycles of activity. Vivacious leaders tend to be incessantly on the go, living for fleeting adventures and temporary joys. Such ebullience suggests drive (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991), but the lack of social dependability (Millon, 1995) makes this energy largely misdirected. Both narcissists and histrionics desire the affection of others, but narcissists presume attention will be given whereas histrionics actively solicit it through seductive, over-the-top displays. The extreme confidence coupled with attention seeking can create problems in resisting projects, resulting in overcommitment and under-deliverance. Ultimately, vivacious leaders are blind to the possibility of failure. According to Millon (1995),

Lacking inner substance and self-discipline, tempted by new and exciting stimuli, and skilled in attracting and cheerfully seducing others, such vivacious histrionic personalities may travel an erratic course of flagrant irresponsibility and leave in their wake the scattered debris of seductive and once promising hopes. (pp. 373-374)

Hypothesis 2: The relationship between narcissism (bold) and performance is moderated by histrionic (colorful) tendencies, such that the negative relationship is stronger for leaders who are higher on histrionic tendencies.

Narcissism × Adjustment: The Constructive Narcissist. Narcissism has been linked to unhappiness, worry, and vulnerability (Wink, 1991), and to feelings of emptiness and inferiority (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Narcissistic grandiosity can be seen as a reaction to a fragile, unstable self-esteem, leading to hostility when that sense of superiority is threatened (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Not all narcissists, however, have fragile egos. Some are confident, realistic, and thoughtful (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1997). In a series of five studies, Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, and Rusbut (2004) found that healthy narcissism is negatively related to daily sadness, anxiety, and loneliness, and that these effects can be accounted for by self-esteem, a critical facet of emotional stability. Individuals high on emotional stability are even-tempered, self-confident, calm, resilient, tolerant of stress, and well adjusted (Digman, 1990; Saucier & Ostendorf, 1999). Thus, constructive narcissists may be less likely to display “narcissistic rage” (Hogan & Hogan, 2009). Since stress is a potent activator of dysfunctional tendencies (Hogan et al., 2011), emotionally stable narcissists may be equipped to survive the daily frustrations of the leadership role while maintaining a strong self-image (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006).

Millon (2011) identified *resourceful* and *masterly confident* variants of narcissism, characterized by the need to fulfill selfish desires and pleasures, but with sufficient self-esteem to lessen their dependence on others’ admiration and praise. He noted that constructive narcissists are well adjusted, self-assured, and have great faith in their capabilities, affording the potential to be “gifted if serious” leaders (Millon, 2011, p. 396). Recent empirical evidence suggests that emotional stability may dampen the adverse effects of other “dark-side” traits but its combined effects with narcissism remain untested (Kaiser, LeBreton, & Hogan, 2015).

Hypothesis 3: The relationship between narcissism (bold) and performance is moderated by adjustment, such that the negative relationship is weaker (perhaps even positive) for leaders who are highly adjusted.

Narcissism × Avoidant: The Compensatory Narcissist. Similar to the preceding variant, the compensatory narcissist holds an insecure foundation (Millon, 2011). However, the compensatory form is driven more by self-preservation rather than self-enhancement (Millon, 2011). This suggests some narcissistic flavors suffer from an excess of desires and restraints, or as noted by Foster and Trimm (2008, p. 1014) some narcissists are, “. . . at least somewhat motivated by reward (perhaps they shoot for the moon) but are also highly sensitive to punishment (i.e., they are very afraid to miss).”

Hogan and Hogan (2001) identify those high on avoidant personality as “cautious” due to self-doubt, reluctance to try new things, and concern about making mistakes. In combination, cautiousness might intensify a narcissist’s sensitivity

to defeat or use of avoidance to cope with threats when needed admiration is not forthcoming (Akhtar, 2003). As noted by Millon (2011), this pattern leads to hollow yet safe pursuits that have little contact with tangible outcomes. For instance, a typical narcissist might be prone to jump at opportunities (e.g., a new start-up) because he or she is sensitive to rewards (e.g., profits, status) but is *also* insensitive to negative outcomes (e.g., failure of the venture). In this sense, they deliver on their visions when high risks yield high rewards. However, when also deeply insecure or “cautious,” such individuals avoid such opportunities and prefer to live in a safe “fantasy land” where they recount past successes or boast about the importance of narrow aims. As noted by Millon (2011, p. 406), compensatory narcissists, “. . . ‘know’ that they are frauds at some level, pretenders who seek to convey impressions of being of higher standing than they know is truly the case.” Because of this insecurity, such leaders become hypervigilant to threats, including exquisite sensitivity to negative feedback, watching for critical judgment, and feeling slighted by any sign of disapproval (Millon, 2011). This only serves to intensify their avoidance of real actions.

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between narcissism (bold) and performance is moderated by avoidant (cautious) tendencies, such that the negative relationship is stronger for leaders who are higher on avoidant tendencies.

Method

Data for the current study were drawn from the Hogan Assessment Systems (HAS) archive, an international collection of data and research containing criterion validation studies linking various personality characteristics with occupational criteria. We sought samples with the following characteristics: (a) included both the Hogan Development Survey (HDS), a measure of targeted dark-side traits, and the Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI), a measure of “bright-side” traits, including adjustment; (b) used only supervisory samples; (c) assessed performance identifiable as leadership using subjective evaluations by other-reports (e.g., planning, potential, decision making, mentoring, adaptability); and (d) had *N* exceeding 100, to allow sufficient power to detect interactions (Stone-Romero & Anderson, 1994). Four samples were identified that met the noted conditions (total *N* = 1,070).

Samples

Sample 1 consists of 285 incumbent lower to midlevel managers (70% male) from a major mail express-carrier delivery service company, including White (62.6%), Black (6.4%), Hispanic (3.1%), and Asian American (.6%),

Table 1. Comparison of Overlapping Content From HDS and DSM-IV, Axis 2 Personality Disorders.

DSM-IV personality disorder		HDS theme	
Paranoid	Distrustful and suspicious of others; motives are interpreted as malevolent	Skeptical	Cynical, distrustful, and doubting others' true intentions
Avoidant	Social inhibition, feelings of inadequacy, and hypersensitivity to criticism or rejection	Cautious	Reluctant to take risks for fear of being rejected or negatively evaluated
Narcissistic	Arrogant and haughty behaviors or attitudes; grandiose sense of self-importance and entitlement	Bold	Unusually self-confident; feelings of grandiosity and entitlement; overevaluation of one's capabilities
Antisocial	Disregard for the truth; impulsivity and failure to plan ahead; failure to conform with social norms	Mischievous	Enjoying risk taking and testing the limits; needing excitement; manipulative, deceitful, and exploitative
Histrionic	Excessive emotionality and attention seeking; self-dramatizing, theatrical, and exaggerate emotional expression	Colorful	Expressive, animated, and dramatic; wanting to be noticed and needing to be the center of attention

Note. HDS = Hogan Development Survey. Adapted from Hogan and Hogan (2001).

participants. Sample 2 includes 120 senior directors from a Fortune 500 global communication company, consisting primarily of White participants (75.4%), with Black (7.4%), Asian American (4.1%), Hispanic (2.5%), and nonreport (10.7%) constituting the remainder. Mean age was 37.7 years and 62.3% were male. Sample 3 includes 106 advanced MBA recruits for a Fortune 500 pharmaceutical company, with a racial breakdown of 64.1% White, 8.5% Black, 10.3% Asian American, and 5.1% Hispanic. Mean age was 29.8 years (sex data were unavailable for this sample). Sample 4 included 559 assistant and store-level managers from a conglomeration of major retail stores who regularly interacted (e.g., 1-2 times a day) with their upper-level supervisors. A majority of the sample was White (72%) and male (66.2%) with an average age of 37.0 years.

Measures

Hogan Personality Inventory. The HPI (Hogan & Hogan, 2007) contains seven primary scales aligned with the FFM, and includes a total of 206 true-false items. As reported in the HPI manual (Hogan & Hogan, 2007), the internal consistency and test-retest reliabilities for adjustment are .89 and .86, respectively. The archival data, unfortunately, did not permit calculation of sample-specific reliabilities.

Hogan Development Survey. Based on recurring behaviors found in multiple taxonomies of flawed interpersonal tendencies, the HDS targets the dysfunctional interpersonal themes of employed adults (Hogan & Hogan, 2001) using 168 dichotomously scored items on 11 scales (14 items per scale). These dysfunctional dispositions reflect distorted interpersonal beliefs that emerge when people encounter stress or stop considering how their actions affect others. The HDS is not a medical or clinical assessment. It does not measure personality disorders, which are manifestations of

mental disorder. Instead, the HDS assesses self-defeating expressions of normal personality. The DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 647) makes this same distinction between behavioral traits and disorders—self-defeating behaviors, such as those predicted by the HDS, come and go depending on the context. In contrast, personality disorders are enduring and pervasive across contexts.

Scale names and associated subclinical traits are listed with definitions in Table 1. Multiple studies support the construct validity of the HDS, including convergence with parallel scales on the MMPI (r range = .45 for antisocial to .67 for borderline; Hogan & Hogan, 2001), aberrant linear compounds of the NEO-PI-R facets for antisocial, borderline, histrionic, avoidant, and obsessive-compulsive tendencies (r range = .47 to .62; De Fruyt, Wille, & Furnham, 2013), and the Dark Triad of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy (r range = .35 to .47; Douglas, Bore, & Munro, 2012). The recent HDS technical manual reports coefficient alphas between .43 and .68, with an average of .59, and 9-month test-retest reliabilities ranging from .55 for Skeptical to .68 for Mischievous (Hogan & Hogan, 2009).

Leadership Performance. Performance was assessed in all samples using a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale. Performance in Sample 1 was rated by the ratee's supervisor and one to four peers and in Samples 2 to 4 by the ratee's immediate supervisor. Rater-specific data were unavailable, precluding estimation of interrater reliability. Ratings in Sample 1 were averaged across raters, per competency. Ideally, performance in the multi-item samples would be assessed on the same outcomes, allowing direct comparisons between samples. The competency models, however, were distinct across samples with respect to content, specificity, and dimensionality. Accordingly, we averaged and then standardized all competency scores within

samples in deriving an index of global leadership performance. Sample items include, for Sample 1, “promotes necessary change even in the face of opposition,” “considers how decisions will affect the staff”; for Sample 2, “engages and inspires others,” “establishes and manages plans”; for Sample 3, “respects and values others’ contributions,” “accomplishes goals by securing others’ cooperation”; and, for Sample 4, “ability to lead and inspire others,” “problem solve.” Alphas were .98 (54 items), .85 (15 items), .96 (37 items), and .96 (7 items), respectively.¹

Main Analyses

Cross-trait interactions were analyzed using hierarchical moderated multiple regression. Product terms for interaction effects were created after first mean-centering all predictors. Variables were entered in three steps per analysis: the two traits in the first two steps followed by their product in the third. Cross-trait interaction would be supported by significant increases in variance explained by the product term. To organize results and explore heterogeneity in trait interactions, follow-up analyses were run by pooling raw data across samples and controlling for sample membership (Hussong, Curran, & Bauer, 2013). Pooling original data rather than summary statistics (i.e., meta-analysis) has the advantage of combined power while also retaining individual information to analyze interactions at the person- rather than study-level. For numerous reasons (e.g., different performance metrics standardized within sample, small number of clusters), we used ordinary least squares (OLS) rather than hierarchical linear modeling (HLM). However, all analyses were rerun using HLM with primary predictors and their interactions treated as randomly varying slopes nested within organizations. In all cases, HLM and OLS produced similar results.²

Results

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics and variable intercorrelations pooled across samples. A few points bear mention. First, most HDS correlations are in the expected negative direction with global performance. Second, an independent Steiger test of averaged Fisher z -transformed correlations shows that derailers-performance relations are marginally stronger and in the expected negative direction for Samples 1 and 2 ($\bar{r} = -.08$) compared with Samples 3 and 4 ($\bar{r} = -.001$; $z = 1.41$, $p = .08$). This suggests the dark-side interactions may shift null effects (e.g., bold has no association with leadership performance) in a significant direction as opposed to amplifying existing negative associations.

Hierarchical Moderated Regression Results

Cross-trait interaction results are reported in Table 3; standardized beta weights are omitted as between-study

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations Pooled Across Samples ($N = 1,070$).

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Adj	31.75	5.08					
2. Bol	8.74	2.40	.13**				
3. Misc	5.84	2.42	-.12**	.39**			
4. Colo	8.34	2.53	.19**	.51**	.40**		
5. Caut	1.70	1.86	-.58**	-.18**	-.10**	-.36**	
6. Glob	3.80	.86	-.06*	-.14**	-.06	-.12**	.06

Note. Adj = Adjustment; Bol = Bold; Misc = Mischievous; Colo = Colorful; Caut = Cautious; Glob = Overall Leadership Performance Composite. *M* and *SD* represent mean and standard deviation, respectively.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Two-tailed tests.

differences in variance produce misleadingly different weights for similarly sized effects (Baguley, 2009). Significance is indicated for one-tailed tests in all cases. For inclusiveness, we note interactions that would be significant in the opposite direction using two-tailed tests; however, we do not interpret nonhypothesized effects. Because of low power in Samples 2 and 3 (owing to modest N s), we indicate marginal significance at the .10 level (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).³ Several points bear discussion regarding results in Table 3.

First, all the hypothesized cross-trait interactions are significant ($p < .05$) in the predicted direction in at least one sample. Results for Sample 1 show the strongest support with $p < .05$ for three of the four interactions. Samples 2 and 4 offer moderate support, with $p < .05$ for three of the eight predicted effects. Six targeted interactions (37.5%) achieve significance in the predicted direction at the .05 level and, if disregarding direction, eight interactions emerge (50%). All told, significant interactions outnumber those expected due to chance by roughly a 5:1 ratio. Second, effect sizes (ΔR^2) for predicted interactions are between .01 and .03, on par with those reported previously for cross-trait interactions (e.g., Witt et al., 2002) and in management research more broadly (Dawson, 2014).

Third, turning to specific effects, the Bold \times Mischievous interaction is significant in Samples 1 ($B = -.01$, $p < .01$) and 4 ($B = -.02$, $p < .01$) providing partial support for Hypothesis 1. Similarly, the Bold \times Colorful interaction explains significant incremental variance in Samples 2 ($B = -.01$, $p < .05$) and 4 ($B = -.02$, $p < .05$), partially supporting Hypothesis 2. The Bold \times Adjustment interaction, posited in Hypothesis 3, garnered weaker support by obtaining significance in the predicted direction only in Sample 1 ($B = .01$, $p < .05$). Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, the Bold \times Cautious interactions operated in opposing directions across samples. Specifically, and in line with our hypotheses, there is a significant negative interaction in Sample 1 ($B = -.01$, $p < .05$) but a positive effect in Samples

2 ($B = .02$) and 4 ($B = .02$); however, since such effects were not expected, this provides weak support for Hypothesis 4.

Pooled Moderated Regression

To reconcile inconsistencies across samples, pooled moderated multiple regression was undertaken using dummy-coded sample membership, sample-by-trait interactions, targeted two-way interactions, and potential Trait \times Trait \times Sample interactions. Results are presented in Table 4 with incremental tests for trait-by-trait and trait-by-trait-by-sample effects. Several points bear mention. First, for only the full model, all trait interactions remain in the expected direction with dark-side traits exacerbating and HPI adjustment alleviating detrimental associations with performance. Second, results for the simpler models support two generalizable interactions: Bold \times Mischievousness and Bold \times Colorful. Simple slope analyses confirm that the relationship between bold and leadership performance is significant and negative among mischievous (+1 SD), $B = -.04$, $t(1, 066) = -2.34$, $p = .02$; and colorful (+1 SD), $B = -.05$, $t(1, 066) = -2.53$, $p = .01$; but not among low mischievous ($-1 SD$), $B = .01$, $t(1, 066) = .40$, $p = .69$; or low colorful managers ($-1 SD$), $B = -.01$, $t(1, 066) = -1.02$, $p = .31$.

Third, multiple two- and three-way interactions with sample membership emerged suggesting heterogeneity in dark trait effects. Focusing on the last step, seven marginally or statistically significant three-way interactions emerged across trait pairings. This suggests trait interaction effects are smaller (as is the case for Bold \times Mischievous in Samples 2 and 3) or larger (for Bold \times Colorful in Sample 4) across samples. The Bold \times Cautious trait pairing was the only model to yield significant changes in overall R^2 with the addition of the three-way interaction term. This captures the noted reversals of this interaction across samples (Table 3).

Overall, pooled analyses present a more complete evaluation by showing half of the theorized interactions hold up across samples and, as expected, trend in anticipated directions. At the same time, differences across samples qualify the generalizability of some trait-by-trait interactions. Indeed, Witt et al. (2002) found the negative Agreeableness-by-Conscientiousness interaction—that is, micromanager—was significant only in jobs requiring high levels of social interaction. While not theorized a priori, possible situational specificity in trait interactions was explored by drawing from recent trait-performance and derailment research (Hogan et al., 2011; Judge & Zapato, 2015; Oh & Berry, 2009; Tett, Simonet, Walser, & Cameron, 2013). Specifically, we tested three situational moderators: organizational hierarchy, industry strength, and rater source.

Table 3. Changes in R^2 and Unstandardized Beta Weights From Consecutive Steps in Regressing Global Leadership Performance Onto Targeted Moderator Pairs.

Sample/ Trait 1 \times Trait 2	Trait 1 (Step 1)		Trait 2 (Step 2)		Trait \times Trait (Step 3)	
	B	ΔR^2	B	ΔR^2	B	ΔR^2
Sample 1 (N = 285)						
Bold \times Mischievous	-.01	.005	-.02**	.024	-.01**	.032
Bold \times Colorful	-.01	.005	-.00	.000	.00	.000
Bold \times Adjustment	-.01	.005	.02**	.087	.01*	.016
Bold \times Cautious	-.01	.005	-.04**	.059	-.01*	.009
Sample 2 (N = 120)						
Bold \times Mischievous	-.02	.008	-.01	.006	.00	.000
Bold \times Colorful	-.02	.008	-.01	.001	-.01*	.023
Bold \times Adjustment	-.02	.008	.00	.001	-.01	.023
Bold \times Cautious	-.02	.008	-.02	.003	.02 ^a	.076
Sample 3 (N = 106)						
Bold \times Mischievous	.01	.002	.03	.011	.00	.001
Bold \times Colorful	.01	.002	.04	.032	.01	.016
Bold \times Adjustment	.01	.002	.03*	.065	-.01	.001
Bold \times Cautious	.01	.002	-.04 [†]	.029	-.00	.000
Sample 4 (N = 559)						
Bold \times Mischievous	-.03 [†]	.005	-.02	.001	-.02*	.010
Bold \times Colorful	-.03 [†]	.005	.01	.000	-.02*	.007
Bold \times Adjustment	-.03 [†]	.005	-.01	.001	.00	.000
Bold \times Cautious	-.03 [†]	.005	.04	.001	.02 ^a	.007

^aDenotes interactions that would be significant using two-tailed tests (coefficient is in opposite direction).

[†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Significance testing reported using one-tailed tests.

Post Hoc Exploration of Trait Interaction Boundary Conditions

Recent reviews suggest that dark-side traits and, by extension, their interactions are more likely to interfere with leaders' performance in lower organizational positions and weaker situations (Hogan et al., 2011; O'Boyle et al., 2012). Regarding level, we reason dark-side traits—interactively or otherwise—are more damaging in lower level positions because such roles demand higher quality leader-member relations. The frequency of follower interactions and needed interpersonal sensitivity skill are both greater for entry-level supervisors (De Meuse, Dai, & Wu, 2011; Kaiser, Craig, Overfield, & Yarborough, 2011). In a similar vein, situational strength is likely to weaken trait-performance outcomes by restricting the expression of natural tendencies (Meyer, Dalal, & Hermida, 2010). We reason a manager's industry offers unique constraints that shape situational strength independently of organizational level; for example, managers working in public safety may face severe legal consequences and zoning regulations limiting what they

Table 4. Pooled Results Regressing Leadership Performance Onto Targeted Moderator Pairs (N = 1,070).

Predictors	Bold × Mis		Bold × Colo		Bold × Adj		Bold × Caut	
	M1	M2	M1	M2	M1	M2	M1	M2
Main effects								
Sample 2	.01	-.07	.00	.08	-.00	-.01	.00	.04
Sample 3	-.00	-.08	-.01	-.03	-.00	-.00	.00	.01
Sample 4	-.00	-.03	-.01	.04	-.00	-.01	-.00	.01
Trait A	-.02	-.01	-.03*	-.02	-.03 [†]	-.00	-.03*	-.03
Trait B	-.03 [†]	-.07*	.01	-.01	.03**	.06**	-.05**	-.14**
Model 1: Trait interaction								
Trait A × Trait B	-.02**	-.03**	-.01*	.00	.00	.01*	.00	-.02 [†]
Trait A/B by sample								
Trait A × Sample 2		-.01		-.01		-.01		-.01
Trait A × Sample 3		.01		.02		.04		.04
Trait A × Sample 4		-.03		-.02		-.01		-.01
Trait B × Sample 2		.04		.00		-.06**		.10*
Trait B × Sample 3		.12*		.09 [†]		-.02		.08
Trait B × Sample 4		.05		.01		-.07**		.18**
Model 2: Three-way interaction								
Trait A × Trait B × Sample 2		.03 [†]		-.02 [†]		-.02**		.07**
Trait A × Trait B × Sample 3		.03 [†]		.02		-.01		.02
Trait A × Trait B × Sample 4		.01		-.02 [†]		-.00		.04**
F	9.71	1.56	2.28	2.25	.39	2.44	1.85	4.96
df	1, 1063	3, 1054	1, 1063	3, 1054	1, 1063	3, 1054	1, 1063	3, 1054
ΔR ²	.01**	.004	.003*	.01 [†]	.00	.01 [†]	.00	.01**

Note. Mis = Mischievous; Colo = Colorful; Adj = Adjustment; Caut = Cautious. M1 = Model 1 with trait interaction added to main effects; M2 = Model 2 with trait-by-trait-by-sample interactions added above all other effects. Coefficients listed above are raw β weights. Traits A and B correspond to the first and second trait labels in the column headings (e.g., Bold is Trait A and Mischievous Trait B for the first column). Δ in R² represents the addition of the two-way trait interaction for M1, which includes all main effects, and the addition of all three-way interaction terms for M2, which includes the full set of main and lower order interactions; in short, ΔR² represents the unique increments of M1 and M2. One-tailed tests used.
[†]p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01.

pursue and how they pursue it (see Dierdorff, Rubin, & Morgeson, 2009). For clarity, we label this industrial rather than situational strength as the referent is the set of activities defining the business environment rather than the manager’s position. A similar strategy was adopted by Meyer, Dalal, and Bonaccio (2009) in classifying specific occupations (airline pilots, nuclear operations) as highly restraining (e.g., government regulations, numerous policies) or consequential (e.g., dangerous, large financial outcomes). Finally, in terms of rating source, peers and followers tend to be more privy to derailing behaviors across a variety of relationship- and task-oriented behaviors (Braddy, Gooty, Fleenor, & Yammarino, 2014). According to Oh and Berry (2009), multiple sources carry unique performance information because raters in different positions attune to different expectations (e.g., results vs. team building) and have unique opportunities to observe the leader in different situations (e.g., presentations vs. mentorship). This suggests that multisource ratings provide more comprehensive coverage of managerial and leadership performance and, as a result, will better reflect the joint behavioral effects of targeted trait combinations.

Table 5 presents a breakdown of coding results across samples. Consistent with others (cf. De Meuse et al., 2011), managerial rank was coded on a 1 (lower level supervisor) to 3 (executive-level) scale using a combination of job descriptions, position titles, and assessment purpose (e.g., hiring senior-level managers). Supervisors were defined as first-line managers overseeing the lowest level of employees, middle managers as those overseeing and linking multiple lower organizational levels, and executives, as top-level managers who report directly to CEOs or governance boards. Rater source was coded 1 if ratings came from only supervisors and 2 if based on a 360-degree composite. Two coders independently classified samples based on rank and performance ratings. Perfect agreement was attained for rating source and the interrater correlation for rank judgments was r = .87. One discrepancy was resolved through consensus. None of the samples met the criteria for top-level management. Rather, managerial samples were classified as supervisors (k = 2) and either directors or high-potential middle managers in developmental programs (k = 2).

Following procedures similar to Judge and Zapato (2015), nine industrial/organizational graduate students

Table 5. Summary of Sample Information and Coded Study-Level Moderators.

Sample	Context	Manager level	Strength	Rating source
1	Delivery service	Lower	3.35	360
2	Telecommunication	Middle	2.10	Supervisor
3	Pharmaceutical	Middle	4.15	Supervisor
4	Retail	Lower	1.90	Supervisor

Note. Industry strength is a composite of judged ratings of constraints and consequences on a scale of 1 (*none at all*) to 5 (*to a great extent*).

rated each samples' industrial context based on Meyer et al.'s (2010) situational strength facets of *consequences*, *constraints*, and *clarity* using a combination of industrial classifications, company descriptions, and primary services. Ratings were made on a scale from 1 (*none at all*) to 5 (*to a great extent*). Reliability was assessed using a two-way random intraclass correlation (ICC) for a single rater—ICC-1—and the mean—ICC-2—across each facet. Support was attained for aggregating consequences (ICC-1 = .63; ICC-2 = .95) and constraints (ICC-1 = .58; ICC-2 = .93) but not clarity (ICC-1 = .09; ICC-2 = .46). Hence, industry strength was operationalized as the aggregate of just the first two aspects ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.04$). Overall, judges rated logistics and pharmaceutical institutions as more restrictive and consequential for public well-being ($M = 3.85$, $SD = .51$) as compared with telecommunications and retail ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 0.25$).

Post Hoc Situational Moderator Analyses

At a marginal level, pooled analyses suggest all interactions vary across samples. Hence, we separately explored the moderating effects of level, strength, and rating source for all trait pairings. Terms were entered in three steps. First, we controlled for trait and situational main effects. Second, we entered all possible two-way interactions. Finally, we tested the incremental significance of the Trait \times Trait \times Situation interaction. For brevity, we report only significant three-way effects in text (full results available on request). With regard to level, there was a significant three-way interaction for Bold \times Adjustment, $F(1, 1062) = 5.48$, $\Delta R^2 = .005$, $B = -.01$, $p = .02$, suggesting that the benefits of being an adjusted narcissist weaken as managerial level increases. Industry strength had a significant three-way interaction for the Bold \times Colorful, $F(1, 1062) = 6.04$, $\Delta R^2 = .006$, $B = .01$, $p = .01$, and Bold \times Cautious pairing, $F(1, 1062) = 6.98$, $\Delta R^2 = .006$, $B = -.02$, $p = .01$. No trait pairings interacted with rating source.

To probe simple effects, we classified samples into strong and weak industries based on whether samples fell above (e.g., pharmaceuticals) or below (e.g., retail) the midpoint. Simple effects support the Bold \times Colorful interaction in weaker industries, with bold negatively predicting

Table 6. Slope Difference for the Three-Way Interactions With Exploratory Situational Variables.

Slope pairs	Bold \times Colorful \times Strength		Bold \times Cautious \times Strength		Bold \times Adjust \times Level	
	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(1) and (2)	-.87	1.00	2.40	.10	1.83	.41
(1) and (3)	-3.05	.01	3.92	.00	3.23	.01
(1) and (4)	-.47	1.00	1.98	.29	1.38	1.00
(2) and (3)	-1.56	.71	.67	1.00	.70	1.00
(2) and (4)	.56	1.00	-.26	1.00	-.36	1.00
(3) and (4)	1.93	.33	-.93	1.00	-1.11	1.00

Note. (1) = Low moderator trait, low situational variable; (2) = low moderator trait, high situational variable; (3) = high moderator trait, low situational variable; (4) = high moderator trait, high situational variable. Adjust = Adjustment. Bonferonni corrections are applied to all *p* values.

performance for managers also high on colorful (+1 *SD*), $B = -.09$, $t(665) = -3.08$, $p = .00$, but not low (-1 *SD*), $B = .00$, $t(665) = .08$, $p = .94$. This pattern was not evident in strong contexts for high ($B = -.02$, $p = .57$) or low ($B = -.03$, $p = .17$) colorful managers. A slightly different pattern emerged for the Bold \times Cautious interaction: in weak contexts, bold has a negative relationship with performance for low caution (-1 *SD*), $B = -.10$, $t(665) = -3.46$, $p = .00$, but no effect for high caution (+1 *SD*), $B = .01$, $t(665) = 0.25$, $p = .80$. There were no significant slopes across levels of cautiousness in strong contexts. Finally, simple slope analyses support the Bold \times Adjustment interaction for lower level managers, with bold negatively predicting leader performance for low (-1 *SD*), $B = -.07$, $t(840) = -2.75$, $p = .006$, but not high adjustment (+1 *SD*), $B = .01$, $t(840) = 0.01$, $p = .62$. When examining middle-level managers, bold was not predictive of performance for low ($B = -.01$, $p = .58$) or high ($B = -.02$, $p = .32$) adjustment.

To further investigate these effects, we calculated the unbiased beta weights for each slope along with the *t* tests and Bonferonni-adjusted *p* values for each pairwise comparison (Dawson & Richter, 2006). Table 6 shows Slope 1 is significantly different from Slope 3 for all three trait pairings; this represents a comparison of bold-performance relationships across high and low levels of colorful, cautious, and adjustment holding strength and managerial level constant at low levels, respectively. Results indicate that slope differences for trait pairings emerge when tested within but not across situational variables. This provides conditional support for Hypotheses 2 and 3 and, together, suggests that the joint effects of bold with high colorful or low adjustment are, respectively, more detrimental in less-constrained industries or at lower managerial levels. The effects for caution were also only evidence in weaker industries but in the opposite direction predicted providing no support for Hypothesis 4. We return to this latter finding in the discussion.

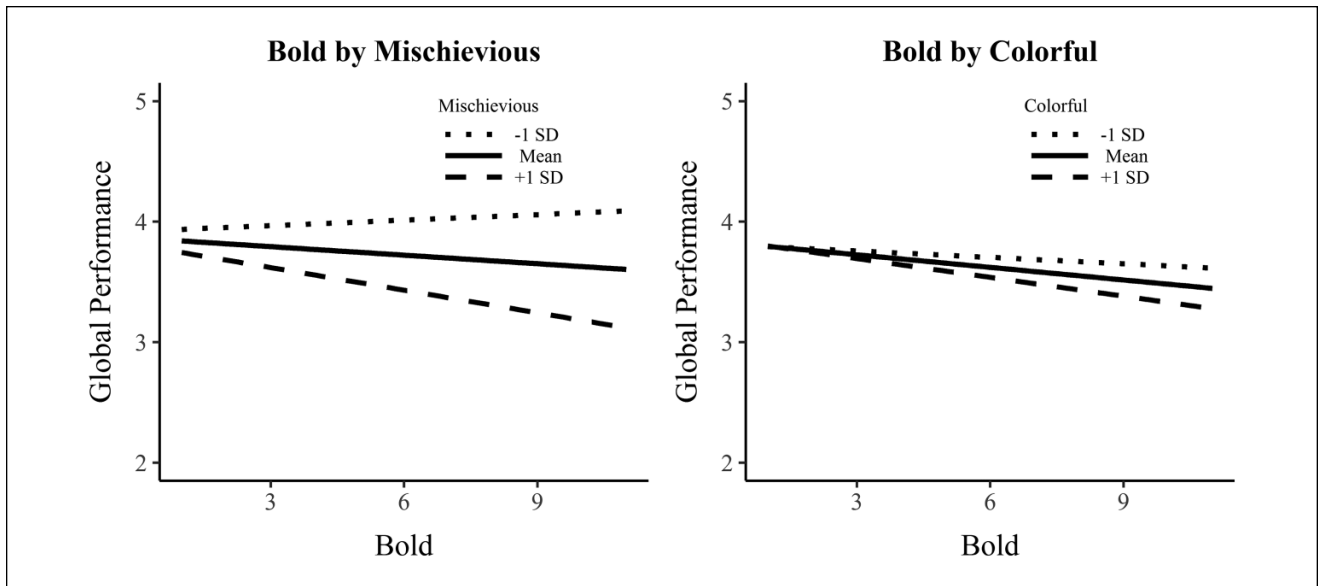


Figure 1. Significant two-way dark-side trait interactions in the pooled data analyses.

Moderation Plots

To facilitate interpretations, predicted results were plotted in *ggplot2* (Wickham & Chang, 2016) at the mean and at 1 *SD* above and below the mean on the trait moderator. Where interactions varied across samples, plots were based on equations generated within rather than across moderator groupings. Figure 1 depicts the two significant interactions from the IDA. The bold–performance relationship is consistent with Hypotheses 1 and 2, as the relationship trends in the negative direction among leaders high on mischievous or colorful. While nonsignificant, the simple slope for the first panel trends positively for those low on mischievous suggesting potential value in narcissists lacking antisocial tendencies. Bold has been positively linked to leadership emergence and performance (Harms et al., 2011; Paunonen et al., 2006). Being low on mischievous (e.g., deceptiveness, recklessness) may allow a “brighter” side of narcissism to emerge (Paunonen et al., 2006).

Figure 2 contrasts the Bold \times Colorful and Bold \times Cautious effects across weak and strong industries as well as the Bold \times Adjustment effects across lower and middle-level managerial positions. The expected pattern under Hypothesis 2 is depicted for “weaker” industries (e.g., Samples 2 and 4) by the dashed line: Bold detracts from performance in those also high on colorful. We see a flipped pattern for the second panel with low cautiousness leading to worse performance. In both panels, a lack of negative main effects for Samples 1 and 3 for those high or low on either derailer is consistent with the idea that strong contexts nullify the effects of personality on behavior (Meyer et al., 2010). The third panel shows different Bold \times Adjustment effects across the two managerial levels. The

trait interaction expected under Hypothesis 3 is evident in the lower level positions of Samples 1 and 4 but not the midlevel roles of the remaining samples.

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to assess whether dark-side trait interactions can explain unique variance in leadership performance above and beyond main trait effects. Overall, findings support the idea that the value of one dark-side trait in leadership can depend on the presence or absence of other traits. Results, however, are mixed. Predicted interactions emerged at rates well above chance, but effects in some cases were opposite those expected. Subsequent pooled analyses show modest generalizability for some interactions across samples. Exploration of sample-level moderators suggest that industry strength and, to a lesser extent, managerial level account for differences in targeted interactions, supporting trait-by-trait-by-situation effects. Our findings bear discussion with respect to targeted cross-trait interactions, situational specificity, and practical implications. Each is presented, in turn, before considering strengths, limitations, and future research.

Targeted Cross-Trait Interactions

Drawing from Millon’s disordered subtypes, we hypothesized four dark-side interactions that would aggravate problems in leading others. Across four samples, we found support for each predicted interaction in at least one sample. Through pooled analyses, more robust support was found for Hypotheses 1 and 2 concerning the deleterious pairings of Narcissistic (bold) \times Antisocial (mischievous) and

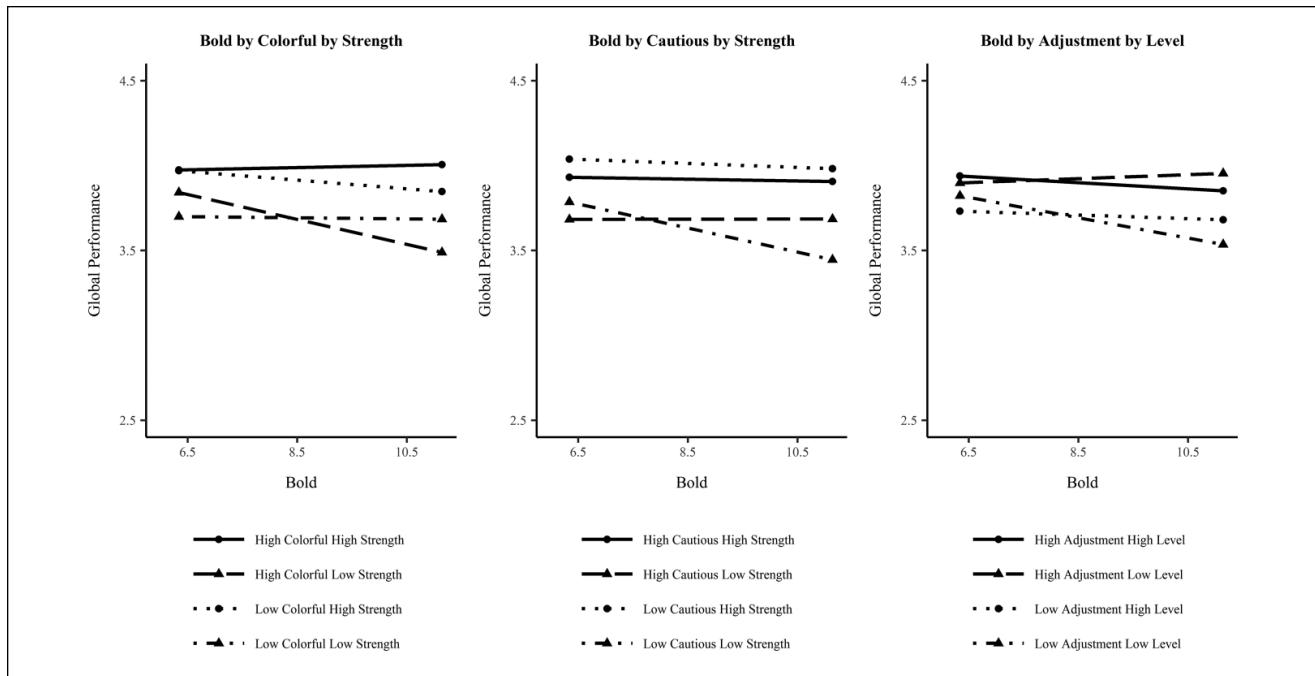


Figure 2. Three-way interactions with trait pairings and exploratory situational variables.

Histrionic (colorful) × Bold. The Bold × Mischievous finding supports Millon’s (2011) notion of the unprincipled narcissist, combining extreme self-interest and callous indifference toward others. The nature of the interactions (see Figure 1) further suggests that narcissistic grandiosity and exaggerated attention seeking may not be harmful when accompanied, respectfully, by an inclination toward rule-following or established (i.e., noneccentric) social norms. The Bold × Colorful interaction, representing the “vivacious” subtype (Millon, 1995), combines the liveliness of the colorful with confidence of the bold. Vivacious leaders seek endless recognition because they “need and feed” off approval (Furnham, 2010, p. 167), leading to a “flighty” leadership style of pursuing momentary whims without completing much of anything.

Accentuated by contextual features, the Bold × Colorful interaction (Samples 2 and 4) and Bold × Adjustment interaction (Samples 1 and 4) were significant in the predicted direction, indicating that individuals scoring high on one of the paired traits (e.g., bold in the bold-colorful pairing) were rated especially low on leadership performance when they were also high colorful or low on adjustment. Showing additional complexity, the pattern was not evident in strong industries or middle-level management positions. The Bold × (low) Adjustment interaction captures the thin-skinned narcissist who demands admiration but, at the same time, is reactive and defensive when faced with slights, mistakes, or rivals. That is, they relentlessly promote their own ideas but retaliate harshly against any negative feedback. Such “vulnerable narcissists” may embody the self-absorbed side of

charisma (Conger, 1990), a promising avenue for research as both charisma and narcissism are linked to leadership (Bass, 1985; Watts et al., 2013).

There was inconsistent evidence for the anticipated negative Bold × Avoidant (cautious) with moderated regression results suggesting varying directions for interactive effects. For instance, the Sample 1 interaction showed performance is predictably lower in leaders who are withdrawn and, in Millon’s terms, compensatory, whereas the pattern reverses in Samples 2 and 4: Caution is masking negative effects of narcissism. A three-way interaction with situational strength qualified results with a surprising negative effect of bold for leaders *low on cautious* but only in weak industries. Contrary to expectation, this suggests cautiousness may curb maladaptive aspects of narcissism in environments with few rules or consequences. Past research has linked narcissism to dysfunctional impulsivity, or making quick yet inappropriate decisions (Foster & Trimm, 2008). Caution may help narcissists inhibit unabashed approach tendencies (e.g., need to be right, taking high risks) in contexts that afford no such restraint (e.g., weak situations). In ways, this pattern is similar to the self-deceptive form of narcissism identified in historical case analyses of leader rhetoric (Humphreys et al., 2016; Kets de Vries & Miller, 1997). Owing to deep-seated insecurity about their personal value, self-deceptive narcissists have a general tendency to procrastinate, to put things off just a bit too long, and sometimes allow perfectionism to give rise to organizational stagnation (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1997). This perfectionism may prevent their more arrogant tendencies from

interfering with performance. Hence, more research is needed to untangle whether the “compensatory” or “self-deceptive” interaction exists and, if so, under what conditions it helps or hinders leaders.

A noteworthy pattern is the two generalizable interactions occurred within the “moving against” cluster (Hogan & Hogan, 2001; bold, mischievous, colorful) where leaders bring themselves into repeated conflict through domination. More specifically, narcissism (i.e., bold) appear damaging in combination with socially venturesome aspects of colorful or the rule-breaking tendencies of mischievous. The “active ingredients” across such interactions are outlandish thoughts or displays (colorful) coupled with callous, social exploitation (bold, mischievous). The interactions may occur because being high on colorful or mischievous leads one to quickly trigger a hidden disdain for others (bold). For instance, a leader’s extravagant attention seeking may draw criticism triggering the reactive, vindictive nature of narcissists. This reinforces the need to consider aberrant personality tendencies beyond the Dark Triad (Wille, De Fruyt, & De Clercq, 2013) and the unique profiles along which derailers co-occur (Furnham, 2010).

Situational Specificity

Inconsistencies in trait interactions across samples, especially where effects reverse in direction, support the need for situational specificity in dealing with personality in the workplace. Tett and Burnett (2003) argue that jobs in general, and situations within jobs, can present workers with different trait-relevant demands (e.g., agreeableness in customer service, extraversion in sales), such that a given trait should not be expected to show generalizable validity across jobs. In some cases, a given trait may be relevant in two settings (i.e., in terms of opportunities for trait expression), but be valued positively in one and negatively in the other (e.g., nurturance in health care vs. national security). Meta-analytic evidence strongly supports such bidirectionality (see, Tett & Christiansen, 2007), and situational specificity more broadly, in the form of large amounts of residual variance in r remaining after accounting for artifactual variance (mostly sampling error). Corresponding 80% credibility intervals around mean population correlations (i.e., ρ s) are typically wide, often spanning $\pm.10$, indicating that trait–outcome relationships vary in both strength and direction as a function of trait-relevant situational demands (Tett & Christiansen, 2007).

Current results extend this line of thinking to consideration of cross-trait interactions with respect to leader rank and situation strength. Regarding supervisory level, the importance of individual “dark-side” traits and even their value (as positive vs. negative qualities) can vary across organizational levels (Hogan et al., 2011). Current findings suggest that the Bold \times Adjustment interaction predicts

ineffective leader performance only in lower level positions. Position expectations may moderate this interaction such that reactive narcissists are viewed as loose cannons at the bottom but as tough talkers (or at least not poor performers) or passionate visionaries at the top. However, organizational levels also vary in complexity, autonomy, and stress, creating a variety of differential trait-relevant demands and corresponding opportunities for different traits and cross-trait interactions to emerge as predictive of performance. Future research should include personality-oriented job analyses to help confirm if changing job expectations release the main and interactive effects of dark-side traits.

In a similar manner, strong contexts dominated by rules and regulations, watchful stakeholders, or concerns for public safety tended to weaken the Bold \times Colorful interaction. As noted by Kaiser and Hogan (2007), granting more discretion to personally magnetic leaders can give way to hubris and general recklessness. Our results support this proposition in that the driven yet erratic vivacious leader is more likely to be negatively judged in weaker industrial contexts. This contrasts with stronger contexts where the products and consequences of the work are more structured, forcing vivacious leaders to act in accordance with the organization’s goals rather than their own egotistical needs: in the words of Furnham (2010, p. 240), “Tie their hands and it matters little what ability, values, and style they bring.”

Additional situational moderators to consider in this regard include (a) the nature of leadership competencies and (b) organizational culture. We noted earlier that performance was assessed independently in the four samples, based on organization-specific competency models. All models included competencies identifiable as leadership, broadly understood, but specifics varied. It is possible the noted cross-sample inconsistencies in targeted effects reflect differences in the nature of leadership as assessed uniquely per sample. We further speculate that the greater need for “consideration” competencies in lower level positions may explain when dark-side interactions are more likely to interfere with a manager’s organizational advancement. Identification of sample-specific competency dimensions would permit more detailed evaluation of this issue.

Organizational culture warrants attention as a situational moderator because it defines what is valued as good and poor performance (e.g., Schein, 1990). This is especially relevant in leadership, where performance is judged as a basis for promotion to higher ranks affording greater influence on culture. One such possibility is a highly competitive, profit-centered culture, in which getting ahead may be mediated by self-promotion fueled by a sense of inferiority and fear of failure. In such environments, well-adjusted narcissists may be less dependent on ego gratification earned by one-upping peers and, as a result, could be seen by others as less ambitious and therefore less successful.

Implications for Practice

The use of personality measures for predicting leadership continues to grow (Rothstein & Goffin, 2006). Some have questioned, however, the usefulness of traditional personality measures (Morgeson et al., 2007) and overreliance on simple bivariate relationships in selection (Witt et al., 2002). Cross-trait interactions offer grounds for increasing reliance on personality measures for predicting and understanding leadership. Practitioners focused on single traits may mistakenly interpret null results as suggesting lack of importance, whereas interactions reveal useful relationships that are conditional on other traits. In Sample 1, for example, bold correlated around 0 with performance as a main effect, and yet interaction results showed that this effect is a cancellation of positive and negative relationships in narcissists, respectively, low versus high on antisocial tendencies.

While observed effect sizes are modest, even small validity gains can aid cost reductions when selection ratios are low and performance consequences large. Take the traditional Brogden–Cronbach–Gleser utility formula assuming a top-down selection strategy (see Cabrera & Raju, 2001 for symbol definitions):

$$\Delta U = N_s r_{xy} SD_y \frac{\phi(sr)}{sr} - NC$$

For a typical midlevel management hiring scenario with current results, we assume an O*NET starting salary for a general operations manager of \$97,730, SD_y of \$39,092 corresponding to a 40% mean salary estimate (Hunter & Schmidt, 1982), a conservative validity coefficient of .10 ($r^2 = .01$), and a low selection ratio of .05. Given these parameters (with no additional cost for calculating an interaction), the estimated utility for a single hire is \$4,031.78. The practicality and utility of incorporating cross-trait interactions into scoring, validation, and decision making within personnel systems is a line for future inquiry.

Further opportunity for using subclinical configurations lies in executive coaching. Person-based matching and profile analyses using motives, skills, and characteristics have shown that certain types of leaders may develop best in certain types of environment. “Motivated communicators” and “thoughtful innovators,” for example, emerge more often in senior-level roles (Mumford et al., 2000). More germane to the current efforts were the findings of those who did not excel, labeled the “disengaged introverts,” “struggling misfits,” and “limited defensives.” The noted earlier findings suggest that certain leaders may struggle to advance because of their distinct configurations, and may respond uniquely to different types of interventions (Mumford et al., 2000). Because personality profiling and individualized assessment (Highhouse, 2002), remain popular among executive coaches, yet often are empirically untested, this area calls for further research to enhance integration.

Strengths and Limitations

Our study has three notable strengths. First, using actual supervisory samples favors generalizability to real populations. Second, reliance on multiple samples permitted evaluation of the stability of targeted effects across populations. Third, this is one of the first studies to assess interactions between dark-side traits in the prediction of leadership performance. Results offer promise for further gains in this area and, moreover, raise interesting questions calling for programmatic investigation. For example, findings could be extended to understanding the evolution and comorbidity of disruptive interpersonal behaviors using alternative models of maladaptive personality (e.g., Dark Triad, Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Personality Inventory for DSM-5, Krueger, Derringer, Markon, Watson, & Skodol, 2012).

In addition to the noted strengths, our results bear consideration in light of several limitations. First, our sample treats managerial position and industrial context as proxies for leadership and situational strength. Future research should extend current findings to leader samples who have shown profound social influence along with direct measures of situational strength.⁴ Second, reversal of several predicted interactions suggests that conceptual rationales are incomplete. Lack of sample-specific information precluded evaluation of additional situational moderators that might help account for the noted cross-sample differences in targeted effects. Post hoc explanations call for replication and programmatic study of situational moderators. Third, reliance on sample-specific performance measures led us to use overall mean ratings, thereby possibly masking more nuanced effects involving specific aspects of performance. Testing effects per performance aspect would introduce additional complexity but could prove valuable both theoretically and practically.

Future Research

Our results prompt consideration of a number of questions for future study. First, unexpected findings and those with marginal significance call for replication with adequately sized samples. Second, cross-sample differences in the strength and, in some cases, direction of cross-trait interactions call for additional examination of particular trait-relevant situational moderators, including organizational culture, supervisory level, autonomy, and specific trait-relevant demands (Tett et al., 2013). Three, cross-trait interactions targeted here are a subset of those permitted by pairing dark-side traits recognized in the literature. The 11 traits assessed by the HDS, for example, offer 55 distinct pairings, only 4 of which were investigated here. Researchers are encouraged to adopt a theory-driven approach to identify promising interactions. Given the relative nascence of cross-trait interactions applied to leadership, exploratory

strategies may also prove worthwhile in the short run, followed by replication. Fourth, interactions may be meaningful beyond simple two-way effects. Study of higher order interactions is encouraged, including configurations assessable as profiles (e.g., using latent profile analysis). Finally, research is needed to investigate changes in the importance and direction of relationships between dark-side traits and leadership over time with respect to tenure in both a particular job as well as across entire careers. Studies into these and related questions can be expected to advance understanding of personality–leadership relationships and, correspondingly, how trait-based predictions and developmental guidance might be improved.

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Notes

1. We explored the dimensionality of performance ratings per sample using principal components analysis. A dominant first factor emerged in each case, accounting for 53%, 33%, 44%, and 81% of the total variance, respectively. Varimax rotated factors with eigenvalues >1, however, numbered 7, 5, 7, and 1. Identifying multiple performance subdimensions within samples would afford a finer grained analysis of cross-trait interactions, but the added complexity, both methodologically and with respect to results, was judged beyond the scope of the current article. The high alphas for global scores support their use as general performance measures in the current analyses.
2. HLM results available on request.
3. Previous studies failing to replicate cross-trait interactions have been questioned on grounds of sensitivity (Penney et al., 2011), supporting use of more liberal tests when exploring new avenues of research as judged the case here.
4. We thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

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